

CHAPTER 4

A Multilevel Community-Based Approach To Overweight Prevention

How To Fit *Fit WIC California* Into Your Community

By

Pat Crawford, Wendi Gosliner,

Poppy Strode, Cindy Caffery

Claudia Burnett and Yolanda Becerra-Jones

- 4.1 The Rationale Behind *Fit WIC California*
- 4.2 The Heart of *Fit WIC California*—How Does It Work?
 - 4.2.1 Intervening at Spectrum Levels in Your WIC Program
 - 4.2.2 Intervening at Spectrum Levels in Your Community Through a Coalition
- 4.3 The Impact of *Fit WIC California*: Evaluation
 - 4.3.1 Impact of the *Fit WIC* Program on WIC Sites
 - 4.3.2 Impact of *Fit WIC* Task Force Activities on Communities
- 4.4 Lessons Learned by the *Fit WIC California* Project Team
- 4.5 Where You Can Get Tools, Assistance and More Information About *Fit WIC California*



Chapter 4

A Multilevel, Community-Based Approach To Overweight Prevention

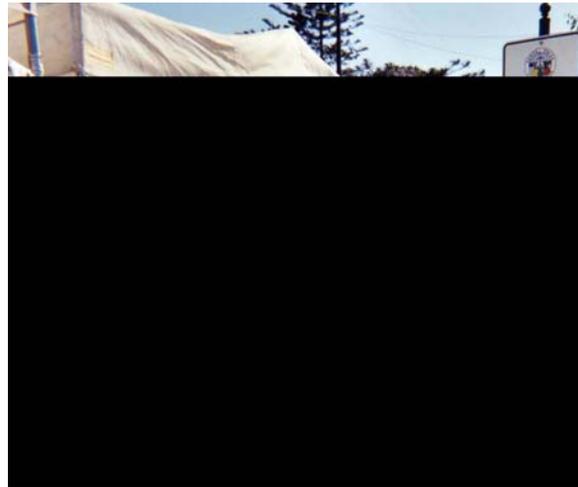
How To Fit *Fit WIC California* Into Your Community

4.1 The Rationale Behind *Fit WIC California*

The *Fit WIC* program in California was shaped by insights gained from the assessment phase of the project, as described in Chapter 2. From that assessment, it was clear that WIC participants, WIC staff members, and community members were concerned about some of the same issues, including the difficulties involved in addressing overweight with very young children, community safety, and a lack of community resources for physical activity and healthy foods.

WIC parents and WIC staff members were interested in learning new techniques for preventing childhood overweight. Community partners felt that the issue of overweight in young children was not being addressed adequately in their community. About half of the community partners knew very little about the WIC program.

In order to address the breadth of these concerns, the *Fit WIC California* Project Team developed a multilevel intervention based on the theoretical framework of the *Spectrum of Prevention*.



As a leader in a community coalition, you might bring a farmers market to your community.



The Spectrum of Prevention¹ is a model, developed by the Prevention Institute in Berkeley, California, which outlines six levels on which to act in order to develop a comprehensive intervention:

1. Strengthening individual knowledge and skills;
2. Promoting community education;
3. Educating providers;
4. Fostering coalitions and networks;
5. Changing organizational practices;
6. Influencing policy and legislation.

When intervention activities are conducted simultaneously on multiple levels, the activities reinforce each other and can yield powerful results.

Empowerment theory² also guided the development of *Fit WIC California*. Empowerment theory suggests that when individuals and groups develop their own strategies for intervention, they take ownership and are therefore more likely to achieve success. In *Fit WIC California*, interventions build from the ground up. Local WIC organizations lead their staffs and communities to address the issue of childhood overweight in a locally appropriate, community-driven manner, while the State project team offers support, training, and technical assistance.

¹ For more information, visit the Prevention Institute's website: www.preventioninstitute.org (accessed 4 Dec 2002).

² For a description of empowerment theory, see *Empowerment Theory & Practice*, University of Michigan, Winter 1996, Lorraine M. Gutierrez Critical Psychology Teaching Materials. <http://www.radpsynet.org/teaching/gutierrez.html> (accessed 7 Feb 2003).



4.2 The Heart of *Fit WIC California*—How Does It Work?

Intervening on many levels simultaneously, as guided by the Spectrum of Prevention, is the heart of *Fit WIC California*. The table below describes the six levels of the Spectrum of Prevention and provides examples of interventions at each level. The levels of the Spectrum build upon one another, so that activities at each level reinforce each other.

Spectrum Level	Definition of Level	<i>Fit WIC California</i> Activities
1. Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills	Enhancing an individual's ability to prevent illness and promote health and physical activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce physical activity handouts for parents to take home. • Offer WIC classes that teach parents simple physical activities to do at home with their children and provide information about local activity resources. • Introduce WIC activities that involve children in cooking and planting gardens.
2. Promoting Community Education	Reaching groups of people with information and resources to promote health and physical activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend and host community events. • Work with community groups to ensure that healthful snacks and physical activity information are available at all community events. • Publish local newsletters with messages about healthful eating and physical activity. • Partner with other groups to teach classes in the community about nutrition and physical activity.
3. Educating Providers	Informing providers who will transmit skills and knowledge to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite community partners to WIC training events to encourage overlap of messages. • Adapt WIC staff training protocols to include staff wellness activities, training on physical activity for families and new approaches for talking with parents about feeding and weight issues. • Develop resource brochures and provide training for health care providers.
4. Fostering Coalitions and Networks	Bringing together groups and individuals for broader goals and greater impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop <i>Fit WIC</i> community task forces, composed of community leaders, health professionals, WIC staff and participants, political representatives. • Meet regularly with task force groups to determine locally appropriate strategies for preventing childhood overweight.
5. Changing Organizational Practices	Adopting regulations and shaping norms to improve health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce WIC as a community leader in preventing overweight. • Incorporate physical activity into all aspects of WIC practice. • Encourage WIC sites and community partners to model healthful nutrition and physical activity behaviors at staff meetings and during workdays. • Initiate staff wellness programs. • Introduce hands-on, participant-centered education at WIC sites. • Provide safe play areas for children in WIC sites.
6. Influencing Policy and Legislation	Changing laws and policies to influence outcomes in health and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certify a local farmers market and implement the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program in a new community. • Advocate for a state bill to improve school nutrition programs. • Work with city to allow vacant land to be used for a community garden project. • Advocate for adopting physical activity as an essential element of WIC nutrition education.



As you implement *Fit WIC California*, you will intervene at some or all of these levels in two venues: (1) in your WIC program and (2) in your greater community through a community coalition. Even if your time and resources don't allow you to intervene at all levels simultaneously, your efforts will be strengthened if you are able to include more than one level in your intervention.

4.2.1 Intervening at Spectrum Levels in Your WIC Program

Spectrum Level 1: How WIC Can Strengthen Individual Knowledge and Skills

The WIC program should ensure that the limited individual and group education time available is spent in the most effective way possible. Moving toward learner-centered group sessions can enhance the effectiveness of WIC education.

Learner-centered education involves assessing the needs of the learner and carefully designing the learning activities to support the principles of respect and safety, immediate usefulness of the learning, and engagement of the learner in the learning process. Activities are provided for different learning styles, and many activities are done in pairs or small groups. In a learner-centered classroom, learners should be speaking at least 50% of the time. Attitudes and skills gained are as important as knowledge. The California WIC program's efforts toward learner-centered education for participants and staff have been strengthened through application of the approach developed by Jane Vella in Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach (see Section 4.5).

Samples of learner-centered lesson plans are available on the *Fit WIC* link on the *WIC Works* website (see Section 4.5) to help you implement a learner-centered approach to nutrition education. The *Fit WIC California* Project Team has designed a series of lesson plans on the topics listed below.

- ❑ Super-Sized! Facilitated Group Discussion About Fast Foods
- ❑ Fit Families Play: Hands-On Physical Activity With Children Using Home-Made Toys

- ❑ Making Snacks Count: Family-Centered Healthy Snack Activities
- ❑ Grow Your Own Garden: Family-Centered Gardening Activities
- ❑ What's On TV? Facilitated Group Discussion on Children and Television
- ❑ Maria's Problem: Facilitated Group Discussion Around Challenges in Providing Healthy Snacks for Children
- ❑ The Little Red Hen: Family-Centered Mealtime Activities.

Educational tools, like handouts, posters and bulletin board displays, can help reinforce your new participant education protocols. A series of pamphlets on physical activity for WIC families was developed by the *Fit WIC California* Project Team and is available in both English and Spanish (*see Section 4.5*).



Lesson plans for Fit WIC California use items such as these to make learning more concrete for participants.

Spectrum Level 2: How WIC Can Promote Community Education

Consistent messages from different sources help to reinforce learning. While you work towards educating staff and participants in your WIC program, it is important to get involved with others to promote the same messages throughout the community. You may do this by participating in community events, like health fairs or festivals. You might contribute articles to local newsletters, or partner with other groups to teach classes in the community about nutrition and physical activity. You can ensure that community education events are effective and coordinated by leading or participating in a coalition or task force. Guidelines for developing a task force are given in Section 4.2.2.



Spectrum Level 3: How WIC Can Educate Providers

In order to advance your goals for individual and group education of participants, and also your organizational goals for addressing the issue of childhood overweight (see Spectrum Level 5), you will want to consider providing additional training for your staff. Ensure that all your staff-training sessions and meetings reinforce and model the learner-centered approach that staff are using in their participant education sessions. Resources for the following staff training topics are available from the Project Team (see Section 4.5).

Training 1: Facilitated Group Discussion (FGD). Offer staff members an intensive workshop on using discussion-based methods for conducting group education sessions; more than one training session will be needed to fully develop skills in this technique. If your staff is already using FGD techniques, you might offer a refresher workshop focusing on *Fit WIC* topics. Resources for learning more about FGD are given in Chapter 10.3.2.

Training 2: Active Play for Families. Find an inspiring child development specialist to help your staff learn to motivate families to be more physically active. Training should include developmentally appropriate physical activities for young children, ways to incorporate physical activity into WIC education³, how to make low-cost toys and ideas to help WIC families become more active. Make this training session interactive, with the staff actually getting up and doing the physical activities that they will teach to WIC families. California's *Fit WIC* Project Team is working on a training video on this topic; check the *Fit WIC* link on the *WIC Works* website for availability (see Section 4.5).

Training 3: Staff Wellness Training. Provide your staff with a training session focused on ways they can incorporate physical activity and healthy eating into daily life. Find a local speaker who will motivate and inspire your staff. Include information about the importance of physical activity for adults and ways to begin an activity program safely. Take this opportunity to brainstorm about

³ Please refer to the text box, "WIC Principles on Physical Activity..." on p. 41 for further guidance on this topic.



ways to support your staff members, and about ways they can support each other, in developing and following through with their fitness and nutrition goals. Chapter 10.3.3 contains other resources on staff wellness training (see especially the video *Fuel Up, Lift Off LA*).

Training 4: Talking with Families About Weight, Parenting, and Feeding.

Staff members are likely to have many questions about how to talk with families about weight issues. A training session can help staff members to understand cultural differences in attitudes about weight and health, to learn to focus on health goals rather than on weight goals with parents of overweight children, and to understand why preventing overweight is an appropriate topic for all WIC families. Additionally, staff can learn to use open-ended questions with active listening, and to identify and build upon families' strengths when introducing new concepts about weight or feeding. It may be helpful for staff to be reminded of the stages of development of young children and how those affect mealtimes, so that they can offer strategies to parents who are struggling with developmental behaviors.

Training 5: Putting It All Together. Schedule a session devoted to reinforcement of skills. Find out ahead of time what techniques are working well and which need further review. During the session, allow staff members to share their successes and their challenges.

Spectrum Level 4: How WIC Can Foster Coalitions and Networks

Many of the barriers which WIC participants face in achieving a healthy lifestyle go beyond the scope of WIC services. WIC can play a leadership role in organizing a community task force or coalition to address some of these issues. Once a coalition is formed, it can use the Spectrum of Prevention to identify ways of improving opportunities for healthy living in the community. This process is described in Section 4.2.2.

Spectrum Level 5: How WIC Can Change Organizational Practices

The relatively simple organizational changes described below can ensure that the prevention of childhood overweight becomes a priority in your WIC program. Before making changes, always assess your current practices: talk with staff members at different levels; establish organizational goals; and think about ways to implement your goals.

Organizational Change 1: Create a Healthy Work Environment. Support staff members in their personal efforts to eat well and be physically active, so that they can be role models for WIC participants and their communities. WIC participants will then be able to learn from individuals who personally understand the difficulties and rewards inherent in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

You can support your staff in their efforts by creating a work environment characterized by healthy food choices and physical activity. Ensure that foods offered on-site for snacks, staff meetings, or potlucks are healthy and include fresh fruits and vegetables. Make sure that on-site vending machines offer healthy food choices. Include a physical activity break in any meeting or training session that lasts more than two hours. Celebrate special occasions with a lunchtime walk to a favorite location or the purchase of a health-promoting item. Make sure staff members have a safe place to store walking shoes and encourage group physical activities.



Making physical activity a priority in WIC can mean involving staff in activity classes on site.

Organizational Change 2: Institutionalize a Staff Wellness Program. A formal staff wellness program at your WIC site is an excellent way to support change to a healthy lifestyle. A kick-off event, regular reinforcement, and



incentives contribute to the success of your program. Incentive items⁴ can be used strategically to encourage specific health-related behaviors, and can be given on a monthly or quarterly basis to promote a specific health goal. For example, in the California implementation, pedometers were very popular and effective incentive items. Counting daily steps taken and even competing in “step challenges” encouraged staff members to be more active. WIC participants noticed that staff were wearing pedometers and asked about them. Other incentive items used successfully in California included: reusable lunch bags to encourage bringing healthy lunches from home, water bottles to promote drinking water at work, and tote bags to encourage a trip to a farmers market or bringing an extra pair of shoes to work for walking. A variety of other wellness activities, like walking clubs, fitness training, and healthy lunch programs can be developed by local sites and supported by State agencies to benefit WIC staff members and, ultimately, WIC participants. Having an ongoing plan for wellness activities will ensure that staff members maintain their momentum.

Organizational Change 3: Make Physical Activity a Priority in WIC.

Integrate physical activity messages into all aspects of WIC services. Physical activity is an important part of maintaining a healthy weight and should be addressed by WIC. Physical activity messages can be promoted by staff, taught in group and individual education sessions, integrated into print materials, posted on walls and bulletin boards and modeled by staff members.

Organizational Change 4: Create a Learner-Centered Environment. Ensure that all education and training in WIC, both with staff members and with participants, is learner-centered. A learner-centered approach helps staff members gain new skills and confidence, enables them to work more effectively with participants and ensures that learning focuses on the needs and interests of both learners and teachers.

⁴ Please refer to “A Note for WIC Staff: The Use of Incentives in *Fit WIC* Programs” on page 40 for information on the use of incentives, awards or acknowledgments.

Spectrum Level 6: Influencing Policy and Legislation

This spectrum level was not addressed within the WIC program by the *Fit WIC California* pilot project. See Section 4.2.2 for ways in which policy was addressed by community coalitions.

4.2.2 Intervening at Spectrum Levels in Your Community Through a Community Coalition

A community coalition or task force brings together individuals and organizations who can achieve broader goals and greater impact than might be gained by intervening in your WIC program alone. The *Fit WIC California* Project Team, in partnership with the University of California Cooperative Extension, developed a manual, entitled *Children and Weight: What Communities Can Do*, to help you form a community coalition to address the issue of childhood

overweight. This manual has step-by-step instructions for organizing a coalition. It includes information about conducting a community assessment, ideas for whom to include in your task force, sample agendas for your

meetings and a variety of other tools to simplify the task of community building.

See Chapter 10.3.1 for information on how to order the manual. Depending on the situation in your community, WIC agency staff may help to organize the coalition, lead or co-lead the group, or participate as active members.

Your coalition can work to impact childhood overweight using the multilevel approach of the Spectrum of Prevention.



Intervening at many levels in Fit WIC California requires a group effort by cooperative partners.



Spectrum Level 1: How a Community Task Force Can Strengthen Individual Knowledge and Skills

Coalition member agencies are likely to be motivated to improve the direct services they provide to families as a result of their participation in your effort. They may change curricula to include more information about nutrition and physical activity or may offer new information and handouts to their clients. In this way, the consistency of health messages delivered by service organizations in your community will increase.

Spectrum Level 2: How a Community Task Force Can Promote Community Education

Your coalition can be creative in its approaches to community education. Health fairs are a popular mechanism for sharing information. Your group can participate in health fairs planned by other organizations or it may decide to host one of its own. Other community events, like festivals and other celebrations, can also be good avenues for sharing health messages. Your group can work to ensure that healthful foods are served at these events, and that games for children are physically active and offer prizes that promote health.

Some of your coalition members may offer educational classes and information to families in your community. By sharing resources, you may be able to teach classes about nutrition and physical activity in new locations throughout your community.

Spectrum Level 3: How a Community Task Force Can Educate Providers

Your coalition can identify providers of family services in your community and offer training and information in order to enhance their role in the prevention of childhood overweight. For example, your coalition may wish to offer training sessions to pediatricians and nurses about assessing children's risk for overweight and how to talk with families about promoting physical activity, healthful eating, and dealing with weight issues. Your group can provide training and resources to



your parks and recreation department to help them develop or improve activities for families with young children. Invite your coalition members to attend your training sessions with WIC staff (e.g., staff wellness or teaching families about physical activity); this will ensure that coalition members share consistent messages.

Spectrum Level 4: How a Community Task Force Can Foster Coalitions and Networks

Your coalition will bring together a variety of people to impact the issue of childhood overweight. Remember that each of these individuals is part of another community, organization, and/or probably at least one other coalition or network. Take advantage of the many relationships people bring with them. Make sure that all of your members have the opportunity to share their resources and expertise.

Spectrum Level 5: How a Community Task Force Can Change Organizational Practices

Once representatives from organizations are participating in a community-wide effort to address childhood overweight, it is likely that they will begin to make changes in their own organizations. Describe to task force members the changes you are making in your WIC program; they may begin to make similar changes. For example, staff wellness programs, improved food environments (offering healthful foods whenever meals or snacks are offered, improving vending machine selections, etc.), and including physical activity breaks in long meetings are changes that can be made in many community organizations. By bringing people together to work on this issue, you are also likely to see improved referrals to WIC and the inclusion of health-related topics in other groups' educational materials and curricula.



Spectrum Level 6: How a Community Task Force Can Influence Policy and Legislation

An organized group of committed individuals and organizations can have a significant impact on local, state, and national policies. In many states, there is a great deal of interest in the issue of childhood overweight. Including political representatives on your task force will facilitate the group's policy efforts. Identifying and supporting legislative issues of interest to your task force group will enable your group to influence community wide health policies. For example, you may find that your local legislators are interested in making communities more bicycle and pedestrian friendly or in improving the foods available to children at school.

There may be other community policies that can be influenced to improve the health and nutrition of community members. For example, your city may own or control a number of vacant lots. By working with city officials, you may be able to use those lands for community gardens or farmers markets.

4.3 The Impact of *Fit WIC California*: Evaluation

Fit WIC California has had exciting results. WIC participants, staff members, and task force members all demonstrated positive changes in knowledge, skills, and behaviors leading to healthier living. The Project Team attributes the positive results to the use of a comprehensive, community-based approach. Because this approach focused on empowering local WIC staff and community members, the effects of this intervention are likely to grow with time as the local groups continue their efforts.

The impact of *Fit WIC* on WIC sites and on communities in the California intervention is described here. The results reported are based on pre- and post-surveys of *Fit WIC* community task force members, WIC staff members, and WIC participants, as well as quarterly reports prepared during the project period.

4.3.1. Impact of the *Fit WIC* Program on WIC Sites

Impact on WIC Site Procedures

WIC sites participating in *Fit WIC* made organizational changes to promote nutrition and physical activity for both staff and participants.

- ❖ *Fit WIC* sites integrated physical activity into all aspects of their program: they created or improved play-spaces for children; they encouraged staff members to be physically active; they developed new classes to teach participants about physical activity.
- ❖ *Fit WIC* sites ensured that healthy food choices were available at meetings and training sessions.
- ❖ More staff at *Fit WIC* sites felt that their worksites were supportive of their efforts to be physically active, compared to staff at control sites.

"We ourselves, as employees, we are more active... we have more vegetables, fruits, water, and started walking on breaks..."
WIC staff member

- ❖ Nearly all staff members at *Fit WIC* sites felt that their workplace was “very supportive” in helping them make healthy food choices, while fewer than a third of staff members at control sites felt this way.

Impact on WIC Staff Members

The effect of *California Fit WIC* on WIC staff members, as reported by staff members themselves, was overwhelmingly positive. The intervention improved staff members’ work skills, made them feel more successful with WIC families, and influenced their personal health habits.

- ❖ Nearly all *Fit WIC* staff members felt that they had changed the way they talk with parents about weight.
- ❖ They reported feeling more knowledgeable and better able to deal with weight issues with families.
- ❖ *Fit WIC* staff members were more likely than control site staff members to say that they were “very comfortable” talking about weight issues with parents of overweight children and comfortable encouraging parents to do physical activities with their children.
- ❖ Nearly all *Fit WIC* staff members felt that *they had success* helping parents with overweight kids.
- ❖ *Fit WIC* staff members were much more likely to view referrals to physical activity programs as an important strategy for working with families of overweight children.
- ❖ Eighty percent of *Fit WIC* staff members, compared to only 18% at control sites, reported making more referrals to community physical activity resources compared to the previous year.

“I’m more sensitive. I address the problem in a way that I don’t make them feel bad.”
WIC staff member

“I’m more comfortable talking with participants about weight issues, and I have better materials and information to work with.”
WIC staff member

At the end of the project, *all Fit WIC* staff members said that they are presently physically active on a regular basis. They were more likely than control

site staff members to say that they were trying to increase their physical activity and trying to eat more low fat foods, fruits and vegetables.

Overall, staff members resoundingly reported that *Fit WIC* was good for their worksites, for the WIC participants, and for themselves personally. They enjoyed the training sessions, felt better able to learn and use new skills, and felt more effective in their work with WIC families.

"For me personally, Fit WIC has meant losing weight and actually keeping it off for a year now! I'm looking forward to more wellness challenges for the staff here..."

WIC staff member

Impact on WIC Participants

Parents who had contact with *Fit WIC* activities reported making positive changes. *Fit WIC* participants were:

- ❖ More likely than parents at control sites to think of WIC as a resource to help them find ways to be more active with their child;
- ❖ Significantly more likely to say that they had helped their child watch less TV in the past year;
- ❖ More likely to say that they had tried to help their child do more physical activity during that time period;
- ❖ More likely to say that they had helped their child eat less high fat food in the past year;
- ❖ More likely to say that they themselves were "almost always" regularly physically active.

"Mothers loved it, the kids were super-involved, and I was excited to teach."

WIC staff member

4.3.2 Impact of *Fit WIC* Task Force Activities on Communities

A powerful cooperative relationship was developed when WIC leaders initiated a community-wide task force to address childhood overweight. They became visible community leaders on this topic and at the same time they

enhanced their leadership in WIC with information, resources, and support from community partners.

The *Fit WIC* community task force groups in California brought together diverse people who have maintained their commitment beyond the time period of the project intervention. The task force groups have had the following impacts on the communities they serve:

- ❖ Development of local certified farmers market and distribution of WIC farmers market coupons in the community for the first time;
- ❖ Development of new community workshops for parents about nutrition and physical activity, which reached more than 130 parents;
- ❖ Receipt of a grant for more than \$300,000 to develop a community garden on a vacant city property;
- ❖ Development of new materials and resources for pediatricians, parks and recreation staff, childcare staff, local restaurants and parents;
- ❖ Development of training sessions on preventing childhood overweight and promoting physical activity which were attended by 47 pediatricians and nurses in pediatric offices, 33 parks and recreation staff members, and 12 childcare providers;
- ❖ Creation of a program whereby restaurants participated in a campaign to increase fruit and vegetable consumption by highlighting healthful menu items and using informational table tents;
- ❖ Adoption of a city council resolution to support the 5-A-Day campaign.

"We try to provide better lunches and snacks during school breaks and summer programs."
Fit WIC task force member

"Nurses are more aware about community programs, resulting in more referrals."
Fit WIC task force member

Community members reported that participating on *Fit WIC* task forces positively impacted their organizations and the work they do daily. Members reported:

- ❖ More referrals to and from community agencies;

- ❖ More information about nutrition and physical activity in organizational materials like lesson plans and training curricula;
- ❖ Improvement in the nutritional quality of meals and snacks served in the programs they administered, as well as at their own meetings;
- ❖ Renewed enthusiasm for promoting nutrition and physical activity in their organizations;
- ❖ Increased knowledge of the WIC program, other community resources and the issue of childhood overweight.

Most task force members said that they were pleased with the task force leadership and administration. Although some mentioned their frustration with the sometimes-slow pace of collaborative work, they felt that their expectations for the group had been met, that they had made a difference in their communities, and that they had grown both professionally and personally from their involvement. *All* task force members reported that their participation in the group was worthwhile and that they plan to *continue* their involvement.

4.4 Lessons Learned by the *Fit WIC California* Project Team

Among the rich array of findings from the project, a number in particular stand out. These findings provide a foundation for developing similarly successful programs in your community or state. The lessons learned in California can help you implement your own overweight prevention program in an efficient and effective manner.

❖ *Multilevel interventions in WIC are possible.*

Under the leadership of local agency managers and supervisors, comprehensive interventions which address childhood overweight can be successful in WIC. Conducting activities on various levels creates a positive institutional culture to prevent childhood overweight.

❖ *Local staff buy-in leads to empowerment.*

Empowering local managers to lead a program facilitates their “buy-in.” Once local managers are on-board, they can motivate their agency and site staff to support the effort.

❖ *WIC staff members feel empowered to work in childhood overweight prevention when they are supported in their efforts to make changes in their own health behaviors.*

Supporting WIC staff in making healthy lifestyle changes can have a profound effect on their confidence and on their ability to help WIC participants to make similar changes. Providing a supportive work environment for staff has wide reaching impact. Many changes are inexpensive and easy to make.



- ❖ *Ongoing reinforcement of training and wellness activities is necessary to maintain momentum.*

Training sessions need to have structured follow-up to ensure that staff members are utilizing their new skills. Staff wellness activities need to include regular reinforcement, support for healthy eating choices, and support for physical activity.

- ❖ *Teaching about physical activity in the WIC setting is well received by participants and staff members.*

Physical activity classes and activities are fast becoming a popular enhancement to the nutritional component of WIC.

- ❖ *State agencies can provide staff training sessions, lesson plans, and educational materials to support local staff in addressing the issue of childhood overweight.*

Providing local agencies with training workshops, curriculum and materials eases the time burden on local staff.

- ❖ *Community partners are anxious and ready to move on the childhood overweight issue and almost expect WIC to take the lead.*

Many community agencies recognize the urgent need to address the issue of childhood overweight, and everyone is waiting for someone else to take the lead.

- ❖ *Outside funding is available to community groups and helps support key activities. Seek funding for task force development and activities early in your efforts.*

Without funding, task force groups are limited in the activities they are able to conduct. If groups don't see the results of their efforts, enthusiasm is likely to dwindle. Finding a local resource for grant writing will help the group to move forward on their ideas and action plans.



- ❖ *Take the time to learn about community partners and their organizations before the task force meets for the first time.*

Make sure that members share your goals and don't have different agendas. Find out what each member can contribute to the group. As much as possible, learn about the history and relationships of agencies represented on your task force early on. Turf issues can cause barriers and stall progress. Taking the time to meet with each person individually in the beginning is helpful.

- ❖ *Community organizing is time consuming and can be overwhelming if additional resources are not available to do it.*

Bringing together a community group takes time. Using available resources to guide the process will help. Partner with other organizations early and share responsibilities.



4.5 Where You Can Get Tools, Assistance and More Information About *Fit WIC California*

1. Program Specific Tools and Forms

Some of the tools to help you implement *Fit WIC California* are available at the *Fit WIC* link on the *WIC Works* website: www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/index.html (accessed 21 November 2002).

- ❑ The *California Fit WIC* handouts on physical activity, “Playing with your Baby”, “Playing With Your Toddler”, and “Playing With Your 3 to 5 Year Old” (available in English and Spanish)
- ❑ Staff and participant questionnaires
- ❑ Staff training materials and learner-centered lesson plans

Other important materials for the program can be obtained from the sources listed here:

- ❑ *Children and Weight: What Communities Can Do!* A step-by-step manual for building a task force, developed by the *Fit WIC California* Project Team in partnership with the University of California Cooperative Extension. Order from: Agriculture & Natural Resources, University of California Communication Services. Phone: (510) 642-2431; Email: anrcatalog@ucdavis.edu; or on-line: <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/merchant.ihtml?id=349&step=2> from DANR Publications (accessed 1 Feb 2003).
- ❑ The *California Fit WIC* handouts, “Playing with your Baby”, “Playing With Your Toddler”, and “Playing With Your 3 to 5 Year Old” can also be purchased from the California WIC program: contact Deanna Lester at (916) 928-8881 or dlester@dhs.ca.gov.

2. People to Contact

Pat Crawford, DrPH, RD
Co-Director, The Center for Weight and Health, University of California Berkeley
101 Giannini Hall, Berkeley CA 94720-3100
Phone: (510) 642-1599; Fax: (510) 643-4483
Email: crawford@socrates.berkeley.edu



Wendi Gosliner, MPH, RD
Project Co-Manager, University of California Berkeley
9 Morgan Hall, Berkeley CA 94720-3104
Phone: (510) 642-3589; Fax: (510) 643-8197
Email: wgosline@uclink.berkeley.edu

Poppy Strode, MS, MPH, RD
Project Co-Manager, California Dept. of Health Services, WIC Branch
3901 Lennane Dr., Sacramento CA 95834
Phone: (916) 928-8627; Fax: (916) 928-0518
Email: mstrode@dhs.ca.gov

3. Helpful References

For more details on methods and results from the Project Team

For references to additional reports from the Five-State *Fit WIC* Project, see Chapter 10.1, *Resources Specific to the Five Fit WIC Programs*. Reports made after the publication of this manual will be available or referenced on the *Fit WIC* link on the WIC Works website: www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/index.html (accessed 10 Jan 2003).

The Spectrum of Prevention

For more information about the **Spectrum of Prevention** and ways to use it to brainstorm and prioritize intervention ideas, check the Prevention Institute's website: www.preventioninstitute.org (accessed 4 Dec 2002).

Learner-centered education

For more information about the learner-centered education approach of Jane Vella, see the website: www.janevella.com. Also, the following book is very helpful: *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults, Revised Edition* by Jane Vella; Jossey-Bass, 2002.

Resources for community organizing

Other resources to help you organize a task force in your community are listed in Chapter 10.3.1.